

Celebrating Access Students: Making it through the module – 24 May 2021

KAREN FOLEY: Hello, and welcome to Student Hub Live. Oh, gosh, it's exciting to be here today as we celebrate Access Students.

Some of you may recognise me. My name is Karen Foley, and I'm the chair of Y032, or "Yo 32," as we often like to call it at Student Hub Live events. And I'm also going to be presenting the show today. And I'm joined by a wonderful selection of colleagues here, and most importantly, lots of you at home who are having your lunch and putting meetings in the diary and I think are quite happy to be here today. So a big welcome to everybody.

So an awards ceremony-- I thought, what to wear? And I know Angela has been talking to people in the chat about what to wear. Well, at Student Hub Live events, unfortunately-- or maybe fortunately for some-- we can't see into your own home. But you can interact and talk to each other using our chat and also widgets or polls that we've got going on. So we'd like to know which module you're studying and when you started studying with us.

Now, you can talk about anything you would like today. It's a wonderful opportunity just to be able to connect with other students and/or be part of things together. We've got students here who are on different presentation start dates. So some of you will be nearing the end of your studies and possibly looking at doing your end of module TMA and others will be just the beginning of your journey.

But the one thing is that we do learn a lot along the way. And so this is a chance to reflect and share things with each other in the chat. So please do talk about anything you'd like to, but please don't share personal information in that space today.

So we have the lovely Mary and Jay who are moderating our Hotdesk. Let's take a trip to you first and see how everybody is on what, in West Wales, is a very grim, rainy afternoon. Jay, how's everyone at home?

JAY RIXON: They're doing well. Thank you, Karen. Lots of people have had to kind of book time off work to come and be here with us today. So we're really grateful. Laura's just said she's got her OU hoodie on as well, which is fab. We were talking about what we're wearing. Karen, lots of people saying you look fab with your feather boa and stuff like that.

And yeah, so it's great. So lots of people are talking about where they're studying. And we're talking a bit about the sunshine that has come out where I am. But this morning, it was raining. So it seems to be a really changeable day weather-wise. But yeah, everybody's really happy to be here in the chat.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. And Sharon, yes, I do think that PJs count as evening wear. I mean, they're everywhere now, aren't they, literally. [CHUCKLES] Brilliant.

OK, thank you, Jay. And Mary, we'll come to you in just a minute. But let me introduce you to our panel that we have with us today. We have the lovely George Curry, Sarah McKernan, and Renu Bhandari. So George, let me start with you. Would you say hello and how you are today and a little bit about how you've come to our Access ceremony. How are you feeling? What are you wearing? What's the vibe?

GEORGE CURRY: Well, I'm feeling marvellous. I'm very happy to be here, very excited. My name's George Curry. And I'm the senior manager responsible for Access. But I've also been an OU student. I

did my undergraduate degree in Music with the OU and my master's. And I'm wearing the dress that I wore to my undergraduate degree ceremony, which no longer fits, it turns out. But nevermind. I found it in the back of the wardrobe. So that's marvellous.

Yeah, so I've worked on Access for a very, very long time, been at the OU for 25, 26 years. So yeah, big fan. I'm really excited to hear lots from our Access students today.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Well that's wonderful, George. Yeah, I'm not so sure it's a good thing to be able to fit into those things after many years. But well done giving it a go. And very good that we're on camera just with the front of us showing. Because I've actually got cycle shorts underneath my dress today. So there you have it. [CHUCKLES] Because I was out cycling earlier.

Anyway, Terri has made a bit more of an effort. Terri is wearing a dicky bow, shorts, and dress shoes. So that's excellent. And Vianne is in leggings and a T-shirt, working at 4:00. And Haley's in her dressing gown. Hannah's wearing her hoodie. So we've got lots of different attire going on today.

Sarah, how have you come to our event?

SARAH MCKERNAN: Hi, I'm Sarah McKernan, and I'm in Manchester where it's not very sunny, I'm afraid. But yeah, so I'm here. You might be able to see my Sleepy Dog in the background, Roses. So I'm here with her and I've made a bit of and I've got a spot to toughen but I must confess I do have my jeans on underneath so I like you Karen just to be visible.

KAREN FOLEY: This is what it's all about, Sarah. And why not, I think, you know. [CHUCKLES] Lovely. Thank you. And Renu, how are you today? And how do you come to us?

RENU BHANDARI: Yes, I'm very well, thank you, Karen. I'm just picking up the vibes from this event. And I put on a very formal top. And I happen to be the new Access staff tutor, although I've been with the Open University for 20, 25 years now, teaching on different modules.

But really, really looking forward to this exciting event. And I'm sure students and all of us will have a very good time. Thank you.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Thank you, Renu. And I must say you've taken our dress code of black tie very seriously. And you're looking very formal and lovely today. So thank you.

RENU BHANDARI: Thank you.

KAREN FOLEY: Right. So we have some awards to look at. But first, Mary, let me allow you to come on camera and say hello. And perhaps you can tell us how everyone is at home.

MARY KEYS: Hi, everyone. Nice to be here. Everyone's good, I think. Everyone's kind of approaching this through all different kind of-- some have got kids at home who aren't very well. Others have taken a bit of time from work. But yeah, they're all looking good. Some, we've got comfy clothes, some, we've got dressed up.

But it's really nice to see that there are students who are realising that they're on the same modules. Or there's even a couple students-- one's just finished a module and the other one's looking to start it. So it's great that we're kind of be able to connect today and sort of reach out and chat to each other about our OU study and our courses. So it's really good.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. And Rosalynn says, "I think I'd have found studying overwhelming if I hadn't done Access first. I've learned so much, particularly study skills." And Rosalynn, that's wonderful to hear and sort of brings us on to our first topic of conversation, is just to really reflect on some of the stuff that we wish we'd known when we started and what it's been like being a distance learner.

I think this year has possibly been one of the most challenging in terms of both having the lockdown and then various sort of reprieves from that, et cetera. It's been really hard homeschooling and doing lots of other things and being quite isolated as well. So it'd be really interesting to maybe share some of those reflections about some of the stuff that you've had going on in your lives while you've been studying this year and also what sort of stuff you wish you'd known when you started.

George, let me come to you. You've sort of been studying on and off, doing various dissertations on Hamilton and the like and other such things.

GEORGE CURRY: What else would one do a dissertation on?

[ALL CHUCKLE]

KAREN FOLEY: Well, there has got to be a niche for everything, I think. So you've certainly filled that one. [CHUCKLES]

But George, I mean, what sort of advice would you have for students-- or, I guess, your former self-- when you started studying?

GEORGE CURRY: I wish that I had worried less about needing to know everything and understand how everything worked from day 1. I remember kind of as soon as I'd got access to the materials, I'd look in the assessment guide and I'd look at all the questions that I had to answer and I'd look at the one from the end of the module and think, oh, I don't know anything about that.

But then I realised that I'm not supposed to know anything about it yet, but I will learn as I study, and that actually, if I just think about what I need to do this week, if I just think about knowing where my tutor is and how I can contact them, then it will become clear we don't need to know everything from the start. And I think, once I relaxed into that, I enjoyed my studies a lot more.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

GEORGE CURRY: Yeah, so the other thing is to kind of really get comfortable with whatever type of notes you want to take. And I know we're going to talk about that in a little bit more detail later. But I flirted with lots of different styles before I kind of became comfortable with how I was going to take notes and how they were going to mean something to me a few weeks later. So those are the two things, I think.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. I remember when I started studying, being obsessed-- I bought this beautiful green book. And I was going to take all my notes in chronological order. But because I hadn't done that week, I therefore couldn't progress. And I got in such a state about it.

And I remember sitting there, and sometimes I think, why did I obsess so much? Because they were my notes, nobody else's. But I insisted that I wanted this lovely portfolio of notes afterwards. And yeah, Kirstie says she's really pleased to have done the Access course. She's learned so much and gain lots of study skills.

She'd lost a lot of confidence after burning out in her career. So having found studying has helped regain that. And that's wonderful, isn't it? Because George, we often, I think, at every single meeting about Access, talk about confidence. It's one of those key things that people don't often come to the modules with. But often it's something that, in the reflective components at the end, they say that they've developed.

GEORGE CURRY: Absolutely. I always think-- I've worked on Access for a really, really long time. And although there are lots of benefits of studying Access module, and you learn loads of interesting stuff, and you become able to do lots of interesting things, actually, if by the end of the module, you are confident in

yourself as a learner, then that is far and away the most important possible output that there could be. So it's lovely to hear that that's how some students feel too.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah, Natasha says she's learned so much already. The biggest thing is confidence in learning how to navigate structured learning, which I think is one of the key most important things. Once you can do that, it's like being able to access the internet. You can then find everything out.

And Laura says she's learned a lot about what's expected of her academic-wise. And it's taken the scary part away from starting university at 40.

So yeah, there's lots of different comments going on.

GEORGE CURRY: So young.

KAREN FOLEY: I know. Well, I was going to say, actually, because it is very young, isn't it? Often we think, oh, we're very old at that point. But no no no.

Elise says, since November she's had a baby, moved house, has started this module, and got a kitten. So life's pretty hectic right now. I bet it is.

But how lovely to be able to enjoy some of this as well. Jay, what are people talking about other than these things? I hope I haven't nicked all the best bits.

JAY RIXON: [CHUCKLES] No, I think it's wonderful just seeing how people relate. So we've got a few colleagues in the chat saying that actually the past sort of pandemic, the past season, has been quite a challenge for them. And actually they have struggled going out, they have struggled getting to know people. And we were just saying that Student Hub Live events are so great for that type of thing, because we can come, or we can use technology, we can get together, we can build that sense of community, and that that's where Student Hub Live events really come together.

And as Mary said earlier, it's been wonderful for students on different presentations, as we would say, getting to know each other and talking across modules and those sorts of things. So that's really fantastic. But I think the big theme coming out here is confidence, how Access gives you confidence. So lots of learners are saying about how they've found that Access has given them that confidence, which is fantastic. And then I got very distracted when somebody was talking a bit about stationery shops and how much they'd spent on stationery before starting modules with creative note-taking. So I'm sure we'll talk about that a bit later, but obviously I got a bit distracted when we start talking about stationery stores.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah, we'll do that later, Jay. [CHUCKLES] Jay will fill us in on all that stuff.

Oh, Blaire, there's a name I recognise. Blaire says that he's an agoraphobic who's great at book learning but is also learning more about the social side of things. And Blaire, that's absolutely wonderful. Because I think, very often, particularly in a distanced environment, communication is such an important skill to have. And often we don't value it. But being able to send emails and convey a point or tone, being able to communicate in these sort of virtual settings, is actually, as you say, such an important social skill. And I'm glad you've picked up on that as well.

Terry says that isolation has been tough for many. But Terry's got social anxiety. And so this makes the distance learning absolutely brilliant. And it's really nice that hopefully you feel that, in this sort of setting, we can come together and engage with each other in a way that is kind of comfortable for some of us who maybe do struggle with some of those different ways of interacting as well.

Karen says that, in a few months, it'll be 50 years since she left school. And she thinks it's just as well she's doing Access. We do know, Karen, that the students who do study Access before progressing have

often got those skills and do a lot better. So I'm hoping that you're going to pick up on some wonderful things.

Hey, Jay, is anyone really gutted that they're doing their end-of-module TMA and that the end of the course is upon us? Because I know we've got quite a lot of students who started in October. Anyone upset?

And we're not answering any questions about that, by the way, now. [CHUCKLES]

JAY RIXON: Actually nobody's mentioned it. So I think we're, OK, actually. Everybody's talking much more about their ambitions to study, why it's been so great to start with an Access module, and also how, sometimes, studying in this past year has been really, really helpful to give them something to engage with, give themselves something to work towards.

And again, joining in that study and maybe in your tutor groups or in your module forums or even with Student Hub Live has been a real benefit to them. So yeah, they've been really positive conversations, really lovely.

KAREN FOLEY: Aw, that is brilliant. Jessica says, in this year, she's gained a new job and a promotion and has been studying and has had all of the stress of this year. It's been so intense. But she's really glad she's done something for herself outside of work. "Feels like I've really achieved something to be proud of for me."

And that is exactly the tone that we want today, Jessica. Because we're going to look at some awards. And my little dog there, she's just waking up, actually. She's been very good. She's normally a monkey, Coco.

But let's kick off the first award, which is our Pet Study Buddy Award. So we wanted to have some awards for students. And of course, being on an Access course-- and hopefully completing an Access course-- are absolutely incredible achievements. And stuff you learn along the way is awesome. And I hope that you are taking the time to enjoy that journey, unlike what I did, which was to stress all the time and then come to the end to go, I forgot to really have fun and I want to now spend time thinking about all my mistakes and things. So I really hope that you are enjoying some of the stuff that's going on.

But our first award is for Pet Study Buddy. And Sarah is going to introduce this award and present it today.

SARAH MCKERNAN: So I'm going to introduce the first part, which is the dogs. We've got quite a few dog entries. So I'm going to tell you who they are. So the first one we have is Loki. I don't know whether we've got a photo of Loki Oh, yes. This was sent in by Tia, who says, "This is Loki, who's my assistant's dog. He keeps me company and makes sure all is OK with me. So he's lying on his bed under my desk while I'm studying. And he alerts me to fluctuations in my heart rate and allergies and keeps me calm." So Loki, as I'm sure you'll agree, is very cute.

KAREN FOLEY: Beautiful.

SARAH MCKERNAN: Yeah. So I think we've got more dog entries than any, probably not surprisingly, given that we've got dogs in our background as well.

KAREN FOLEY: I know. Dogs are the best. [CHUCKLES]

SARAH MCKERNAN: Well, yeah.

KAREN FOLEY: Oh, no, I'm sorry about the cats.

[ALL CHUCKLE]

SARAH MCKERNAN: Yeah, I think we could start an argument here, Karen.

KAREN FOLEY: Oh yeah, true, true, true. [CHUCKLES]

SARAH MCKERNAN: So our next dog entry is Otis. And there's a lovely picture of Otis. They're all very calm and collected, these dogs, aren't they?

So Paul sends Otis in. And Paul says, "This is Otis. We don't need a doorbell." Oh, so Otis is looking calm now, but maybe not always. "If you came to the door, you would think the most aggressive, big dog lived here on account of his savage bark. But he's the friendliest and happiest companion. He may look fast asleep, but the slightest crunch of the gravel will set him off."

So he's obviously giving a nice calm exterior there. And then we've got another dog. We haven't got a name for this dog. But it was sent in by Toms. And he's a fine-looking hound. And Toms tells us that this is his pet study buddy. And he looks like he's under the desk there. So I'm sure he's making sure that everything's the way it should be.

KAREN FOLEY: Absolutely beautiful. And how nice is it to be able to study with a dog as well, especially when they're all nice and well behaved as ours are being at the moment, Sarah, fingers crossed.

SARAH MCKERNAN: Let's hope nobody comes to the door and sets them off.

KAREN FOLEY: I've put a sign up. We'll be fine. [CHUCKLES]

SARAH MCKERNAN: So there are three dog entries.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. We've got some other entries as well. But just before we move on to the other sort of types of animals, I'd just like to reflect on some of the things people are talking about. Emily says that the pandemic's made her realise how much mental health is important and how much she wants to help people, hence why she's come to study. And I think those motivations are really, really powerful, wanting to do something good but also recognising that there's an opportunity to develop yourself and your own well-being through doing something that's important to you is really fantastic.

Carrie's been wanting to start with the OU for three years but didn't think she'd be able to study at university level and has proven herself wrong and wishes she did it sooner. I absolutely agree. You know, there's never a right time. Nothing will ever be perfect. And part of the whole point of studying with the Open University is fitting it into your life and dealing with those ups and downs as we've all been doing over the last year.

Gail says the Access module is giving something else to focus on during the pandemic. Gail works in the NHS. And it's been so hectic. So she's really enjoyed being able to have something else to focus on.

And Hannah says, at the beginning of lockdown, she had some phone therapy sessions and didn't go so well with the counsellor. So she thought she could do better than this. And so she's interested in studying psychology. So that's absolutely wonderful. Very often, helping other people, when we've had those experiences, gives us so much empathy and a different insight. So that's wonderful news, Hannah. Brilliant.

Mary, how's everything going with you and the viewers at home? I know I've mentioned those two things.

MARY KEYS: Yeah, no, it's good. It's really nice as well just to see the range of also curriculum areas that people are wanting to progress into as well. We really have got the full spectrum here. We've got psychology, we've got maths, we've got the environment. So that's really nice to see the students starting to reflect on the courses they've done but also the areas that they're wanting to move into as well. But it's great. It's a really, really busy chat. It's great to see everyone engaging.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Thank you, Mary. And remember that the chat can move fast. And sometimes things can feel a little bit overwhelming with that. We record this. So you can always come back and

watch it afterwards. If you want to just take the opportunity to spend a moment with your fellow peers in the chat, talking away, please, please do. If it feels a little bit overwhelming, you don't have to pay attention to everything. But if you want to look back at something, there's a Pin button, which is like one of those little things on Google Maps. You can pin that and then you can scroll up and down. And that chat will stop if there's something that you'd like to pick up on that you perhaps missed, et cetera.

Now, Leanne has a study buddy called Smudge. He loves to sit on her keyboard when she starts studying and working on a TMA. My cat likes to do that. But I tend to find it gets right in the way of what I'm trying to do.

And Gemma's also at home with her 10-month-old son who is a little study buddy. Absolutely. Aren't they the best?

"I just put him in his jumper if my partner is asleep after night shift." So that's a very good way of hopefully getting a little bit of study in there. Gemma, things sound quite busy for you with a 10-month-old at home. So that's great.

OK, so we have some more study buddies to talk about. Renu, who have you got to tell us about?

RENU BHANDARI: Well, Karen, for me, it's not dogs or cats, it's a very special one. And this is Oberon, sent in by Rebecca McAllister. Rebecca says, "Hi, I'm Rebecca. Here's my lovely little bearded dragon, Oberon, helping me study my course Y032 Science, Technology, and Maths. He's always with me when I'm studying, and often tries to help me by getting on my laptop."

I must say, Rebecca, you always have a smiley moment there. He's a lovely little study buddy.

KAREN FOLEY: Aw, isn't he sweet? And not quite big enough to completely navigate the whole keyboard like many cats can. So yeah, Hannah said, if she'd been on the ball, she would have submitted her elderly cat, Vincent, who's no help at all as a study buddy but is a character.

And Sue says her study buddy is Mellon, the Yorkie. "Grabs a blanket when he sees me study out of the box." So Sue thinks she's boring him. Well, maybe explaining things to anybody is a good thing to do. So at the end of the day, sometimes it's good for dogs to have a little bit of a nap. So that's cool.

Right, George, you are championing the feline population of study buddies.

GEORGE CURRY: I am. I am a cat fan. My cat never comes anywhere near me during the day. She's just asleep upstairs somewhere, uttering disdainful meows every now and again.

But here we have-- now, I don't know the name of this lovely, lovely cat. But it's been sent in by George. And George says, "I am never alone," which I think some of us can relate to, kind of resolutely in front of the monitor there, just being as good as humanly possible.

I think there's a very different cat vibe, isn't there, from the "help" that cats give us as opposed to the lovely-- the help that dogs give us. But yes, so there's a lovely cat there, sent in by George.

And then this picture, I'm a very big fan of. This is Poppy. And Poppy is either a lion or bored, I'm not entirely sure, one of the two. But Poppy's been sent in by Chloe. And Chloe says Poppy always keeps her company when she's studying and supports her when she's struggling with her chronic illness.

So I think there's lovely different elements, aren't there, here? There's just having the company of somebody with you when you're studying. But these pets are a really important part of our lives, aren't they? And they offer support in all sorts of different ways. I'm sure we'll go on to talk about making sure that our mental health and well-being is as good as it can be.

And oh, look, there we go. Coco.

KAREN FOLEY: Aw, little Coco.

GEORGE CURRY: So we shouldn't underestimate the importance of our furry friends-- or scaly friends, in Oberon's case-- in our support networks. So yeah, it's been really lovely to see such a lovely array of study buddies.

KAREN FOLEY: This is one that Daniel says, "My cat sits on the bed next to me when I'm studying and snores." My big dog, the other one, does that. And then I sit there and I'm thinking, oh, they're so nice and warm. I should really go to bed and not-- this is at 10:00 in the morning-- and not be working. But sometimes, when they snore and they're so snug and soft, it makes it really hard to study.

Elise's kitten curls up on her shoulder like a little scarf, which sounds lovely. Oh, yes, Sue says the dragon is proofreading. [CHUCKLES] That's good. And Jacob has to study called Paddy. He's massive and never wants attention unless he's studying.

And Kimberly has a different one. Her partner moved in December and bought three budgies. So they're her study buddies now. I wonder how helpful they are, Kimberly. I think perhaps they're the least intrusive because they probably can't get on your desk. And you're probably limited with how you can look after. But let us know how they help you also.

OK, so George, we've got the cats. And who, then, is our winner of our Best Study Buddy competition?

GEORGE CURRY: Well, drum roll please.

KAREN FOLEY: Oh, we don't have a drum roll. [CHUCKLES] Duh duh duh duh duh duh. [CHUCKLES]

GEORGE CURRY: There we go. So I've got this marvellous award ceremony envelope made by my artist children. I'm not sure what this is in the middle here. But there we go.

So let me see who has won. Oh, the tension. The tension.

KAREN FOLEY: It's probably Oberon.

GEORGE CURRY: Look, it's all of the study buddies. Hooray. Hooray, hooray.

Of course we can't say one of them is better than any of the others. They're all marvellous. So everybody who sent in a picture of the study buddy will be getting a small prize through the post in the not-too-distant future. So thank you very much. We've really enjoyed seeing your pictures.

KAREN FOLEY: Aw, brilliant. And all of our study buddies at home are absolutely wonderful. So thank you for sharing all of your stories about those in the chat too. And well done those of you who were organised enough to be able to send us some pictures. And I certainly really enjoyed looking at all of those also.

So let's take a quick trip to our Hotdesk and see how you're doing with all this very busy chat, Jay.

JAY RIXON: Thank you. So again, I think what's so fantastic is the chat and the way that students are sharing, and sharing some really honest things around mental health, around low confidence, around quite sort of sad experiences in their lives and just how much study has helped with that and just how much that sense of confidence has helped with other areas of their lives.

So while we're talking about, in a way, quite light things and actually we're here to have a lot of fun today, I think this also just goes to show you that studying and Access modules and all of sort of the underpinning learning is really important. And it's so valued by our students. And actually we love attending sessions like this because it's a great way to put into practise what we do in our day-to-day as members of staff. This is why we do it and this is what we love to do it.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah, no, absolutely. Lucille says her grandson is amazed that, at 82, his grandmother is studying. And I think it's one of those things, very often, we've heard people today, be them your fur

babies or your real babies, children looking up to somebody who's starting to study is really such a powerful thing.

And you're right, Jay, these things can be absolutely life-changing. And it's so important that we're able to find the time to do that, especially when, sometimes-- I don't know what you guys are like, but I've often thought, this is my study, therefore it sort of goes to the bottom of the list. And often it's really hard to put that above the ironing and the washing and all the other things that seem important in terms of just keeping things ticking over. But actually that study can be such a lifeline, can't it?

JAY RIXON: Yeah, it really can. And it just goes to show, the comments in the chat, where so many people have said it's a massive lifeline. It's a massive lifeline.

And I think what's lovely is that we've got different cohorts of students on Access modules. So there's some really lovely sharing going on and there's lots of tips being exchanged. And I'm sure we'll talk a bit about that some more as well. But it's really lovely to have different cohorts of Access students talking to each other. I think that's what's coming across in the chat really, really well as well.

KAREN FOLEY: And the interesting thing is that it's always, I think, interesting, that it's never a case that the ones who've got to the end have the most advice. Because very often, I think, it's the ones who are just starting that have something else to offer other people. Because I'm hoping that some of you will go on to do different things, be it something with the OU or something elsewhere, or even just knowing that you can do an Access module if you want to and you can study at degree level.

So it's really interesting for those of you who are just starting, perhaps, with more enthusiasm than some of those of you who have at the end of the module can also share. So it's that whole sort of interaction, I think, and dynamics.

A friend of mine's recently started doing her PhD. And I listen to her talking about her Saturday PhD days and how she's pondering all these questions. And I'm just filled with jealousy now. And I think, I wish I had done that. I wish I'd be more organised just to really enjoy and make the most of some of those things. And I think, when you are at the start of your studies, you often have those really good habits and you are enthused about what you're doing.

Mary, how are you? And what are you talking to people about?

MARY KEYS: Yeah, I'm just kind of trying to keep up reading all of this chat. But there's some really good stuff in there. So Susan has said that she's impressed her grandkids. And again, I think it's really nice to see kind of the full spectrum of students coming from different backgrounds, different ages, and starting study at different times. And Sue has commented that apparently everything goes about the ironing on her to-do list. So that's--

KAREN FOLEY: Rightly so [CHUCKLES]

MARY KEYS: But I also think the other thing is people's motivation to study, as well, is coming through, what kind of drove them. And there's some real personal situations that are coming through. So Melanie was saying how she wants to become a diabetic psychologist. Because when she was diagnosed there wasn't the help there. So that's a real motivation, something that's a personal thing that you can then take forward to try and do something and make it right and make it better for the future, which is great. It's really kind of humbling to see all these stories and kind of hear people's motivations coming through. So yeah, it's great.

KAREN FOLEY: Oh, good. I'm so touched, often, by some of the stories that I think our Access students in particular have. Because very often they're doing something for such amazing reasons. And it's so wonderful that, despite some of the knockbacks that we've had, people are keen to make the world a better place by doing things and enabling other people to have better experiences. And that's wonderful. Sharon said her daughter read TMA4 when she was finished, and she looked up and said, wow, you're really clever, aren't you, Mum? And that's a really proud moment. And I think that's amazing, Sharon. I hope you remember that and keep hold of that and believe in it because it's really true.

So Jay, we have our next award now, which is the Use of a Highlighter. And I'm saying Jay because Jay is our resident stationery addict. But on a positive note, she has also been instrumental in creating some Student Hub Live stationery merchandise. So you know, every cloud has a silver lining. And she does these fabulous creative notetaking workshops in Adobe Connect that, incidentally, you're all very, very welcome to as OU students. We do lots and lots of study skills workshops. So do check those out, because they're always catered for Access students. And hopefully you can pick some up. I know some of your names in the chat have been to some of those sessions. So perhaps you can tell other people a bit more about what they're like.

So our next award is about the Best Use of a Highlighter. And we love stationery and notetaking. So Renu, you're going to introduce this award to us. And we have a very interesting winner here.

RENU BHANDARI: Yes, Karen, thank you. This entry is by Leanne. It has great use of different colours, Post-its, and highlighters. Now, notetaking, as you all know, is a very, very personal thing. So it's very important that whatever style you choose of notetaking should work for you.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Now Jay, some of these are familiar concepts, the use of sticking stuff on-- you have a variety of things to stick on-- the use of annotating, the use of highlighting. It's very impressive that it wasn't just one big block of highlight, which sometimes did happen to me when I was highlighting, or "colouring in," as I prefer to call it.

So Jay, would you like to pick up on some of the best things that you can see on this diagram for us-- not diagram, picture.

JAY RIXON: Yeah, but I mean, I think what's great is that the student has had sort of the boldness to have a book and just to draw in it, to write on it, to really get to grips with it. And in a sense, they're your books. They're here for you to do those sorts of things with and not to worry about it. We do know that some students really do worry about sort of defacing their material. And they shouldn't, because that's what they're there for. But if you are a bit worried, I always find a little bit of tracing paper goes a long way.

What I love about this, though, is that we've got some bright colours on here. So it looks like we've got some pink, we've got some yellow highlighters. And so I'm assuming that maybe the yellow means one thing. So it might be that you're looking at particular style of prose or a particular style of writing. Maybe the pink highlighter means something slightly different as well. And then you've got some nice little squiggles and diagrams. So maybe they're linking different parts of the page up with each other and cross-referencing ideas, maybe, for TMA or an EMA.

And then I love these little sort of kind of mini Post-it notes with arrows. So they're really signposting, maybe, just some sections that are really important that maybe need to be revisited later, or almost there is just little markers for kind of a TMA or a tutorial or a discussion with their tutor.

So yeah, I think this is a lovely use of being really bold and really going for it in terms of creative notetaking.

KAREN FOLEY: Absolutely. Now, Samuel says that he finds notetaking difficult. Samuel likes bullet points and spray diagrams as well. So I mean, Samuel, so many people struggle with notetaking, which is why we run Jay's workshop, actually, because it can be a real blocker for a lot of people. And people like different things. I bet you we're also very divided in the room as well on who likes writing on their books and who doesn't. And there may even be differences between textbooks and other sorts of books as well. So that would be interesting.

But Elise has a really good tip on notetaking, which is to be concise and don't write too much, which I think is wonderful. Because the whole notion of taking those notes is to sort of be able to trace back to where the big thing was in the first place, but also to capture something in a different sense. And that shows that you've understood it. And very often, because we'll be teaching something in the notes, the actual artefact or thing that you need, at the end of the day, is a lot shorter than perhaps the original was.

JAY RIXON: Yeah. I think that's really true. Because I think, often, sometimes, the trap that people can fall into is to take too many notes, is almost to write too much down, copy things word for word. And maybe, like you say, Karen, if you are highlighting, you highlight the whole page. And actually, then, when you do go back to it for TMA, for a discussion, for your revision, actually it's really hard to pick out kind of the drill-down elements, what you might need to focus on.

So I think sometimes short and sweet is really helpful. And sometimes it's just being able to learn how, as George was saying earlier, learn how to find the things that you know you're going to need to come back to in a way that suits you. There is no one style that fits all. It's very personal. But at the same time, think Access, part of maybe level-1 study is to find out what works for you. And then also, while you're working through your different study levels, to keep trying new things so that like you said, Karen, you keep your passion a bit. You don't get stuck in a rut.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah, no, absolutely. And we can't assume that what works for one person will work for another. Because Jacob, for example, is colorblind. And so he says that highlighting doesn't help with reviewing things. So absolutely useless for him but amazing for other people. And I guess this is why taking someone else's notes is never quite as good as doing them yourself.

Mary says she needs to rewrite things out for them to actually sink in. And again, sometimes we need those notes to capture what's there. But sometimes that can actually help us scaffold or work through something. I often see it like using picks to climb up a mountain. If I'm reading a really dense article on something that I'd rather not be reading and I have to read it, I sometimes take notes so that I can think what is actually being said here. And that sort of helps me make sense of it and keep the flow of it. Because it's just too much for me to take in as well.

Una says that she rewrites also but uses bullet points. And bullet points are a great way of forcing yourself to be succinct, sometimes, through those structures. Because she finds the highlights are a sensory overload.

So Jay, are these some of the things that you often meet in your creative notetaking approach? Are there certain things that people who may be a certain way inclined do or don't do? Or is it really just an individual thing?

JAY RIXON: I think it is quite an individual thing. But I think that the great thing about some of the sessions that we've had, the Adobe study skill sessions, is that we share some ideas. And actually I love coming to those sessions because I take ideas away for myself as well.

So I'm very much a kind of mind-map gal. I really like using mind maps. But I know they don't work for everybody because they're not linear, because they're not chronological. And I know that some people much, much prefer working that way. And I think, also, that notion of finding something that works for you is really important. Because I'm quite visual. So for me, the way I process learning is to take it from a written construct to a visual one. And that's what works for me but it won't work for everybody because some people get stuck up on maybe what the page looks like and maybe whether it's pretty enough to go on Instagram or something like that. And that's not what it's there for. It's there as a way to say, how am I going to process something?

And as George was saying, what am I going to come back to? When I did need to write my TMA, when I do need to take an exam, what am I going to come back to? And actually, if you're got so many notes and you've got so much text on the page, that's not helpful either. So some of the bigger conversations that we have are just exploring all those issues. And I've got to say, in the Student Hub Live newsletter, we've got a blog on the creative notetaking coming up. And also I'll pop it in the chat in a second, but we've got a YouTube video on creative note-taking that anybody can watch. So I'll share those resources with people if you're a bit curious about them.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Renu, we're going to come to you for the winner in just-- well, let's come now, actually, and then we'll just pick up on some of those things that Jay was talking. So Renu, who is the winner for this category?

RENU BHANDARI: Well, I'm going to pick up the winner for my stationery holder, a very special envelope. So it's a bit of a suspense, but let's see who's won the prize today. And it's Leanne. She's our winner. And she will receive something through the post.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Well done, Leanne. I hope you're looking forward to that. And I hope you get some stationery in there as well. So yes, excellent, excellent award.

Janice, Jay, says that she came to the workshop and she tried to do some pictures on notetaking, drew a pair of scales to compare things. And she can't draw, but it was a really simple idea. And that really worked for her. And I think that's a lovely idea.

And Leanne says she only knew that she could write on the book until halfway through unit 1, which incidentally isn't very far, Leanne, because it might take somebody else a lot longer like myself to recognise that.

And Hannah's tip, I love. Hannah gave up on a notebook. And I actually had to do this as well, because I couldn't deal with the fact that it was bound together and sequential.

So she's using a binder so she can rearrange and add stuff. And that's something I do. Because I hate being confined to the parameters of a page. I like to be able to expand it or Sellotape things to it, highlight it, and also decide whether or not it is something and what folder it goes in. Because very often, my notes might be in one folder, in one thing, and then I'll start another project and I'll take some of those notes into a different space. And I really like having the freedom to do that with my things.

JAY RIXON: I quite like working on different loose paper. I find notebooks a little bit intimidating as well. So actually having lots of loose bits of paper that maybe I can put together with a little clip or a little binder-- again, an excuse to go to a stationery store.

But I love using graph paper, lined paper. I went to a Picasso exhibition once. And they had a list of all the different papers he used. And he used to collect paper and hang it up in his studio. And honestly, apart from all the amazing art, the bit I really wanted to get my hands on were his paper collection.

But I think also having that sense of not feeling pressured and precious about what you're working on is really helpful. Because then you can arrange it, you can stick it in a notebook if you want to. But like you said, Karen, you can also tack pieces of paper onto things. So in some of my textbooks, when I've done some notetaking, I stick a little bit of graph paper onto the side or I stick a little Post-it note on there. So you can sort of expand the page as well.

So there's lots of techniques out there, some really fantastic ideas that are always shared at our Student Hub Live sessions, which is why it's so worth coming to them.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Thank you, Jay. That's lovely. And do put that link in the chat if you would, because I bet people will bookmark that.

So we need to move on to our next section, which is about personal reflections, about learning what interests us. Very often, I think, when you come to Access, you might have an idea about what it is that you're looking at but we often approach things with different discipline lenses. We might cover things that perhaps you thought would be really dull and boring, but actually turn out to be really, really interesting. So I'd like to focus now on some of the stuff that's interesting you. We've heard a lot about people who've been wanting to do certain quite specific things in some cases, other more broad things because of things that have happened to them, or it may be that something's come up and you've sort of thought, this is a really interesting area. This is something I'd like to do. So it may have no relevance to your life or background, but yet it's really captured your heart and mind in the course of the module.

So George, I wonder if you could sort of maybe reflect on some of these things. You've had a few changes in terms of your career and things. What tends to happen with some of these Access students who may start on one angle and then sort of maybe do an options week and think, actually, something else is a little bit more interesting?

GEORGE CURRY: Absolutely. Well, the thing is, the world is a big, complicated place. I don't think that's too controversial a thing to say. And there are lots of different ways that we try and understand the world. And that's kind of all subjects are, really. It's ways of trying to explain and understand the things that are around us. And we might write a poem to do that, we might do a science experiment, or we might write a legal framework to try and understand what's happening around us. They're all just ways of understanding the world.

Now, all of us won't perhaps naturally feel driven to one particular set of explanations or one set of perspectives. But what is brilliant about Access is that they are all so broad that you get a chance to explore lots of different ways of looking at the world. And it might be, as you say, Karen, that you start off coming in, thinking, I want to be a psychologist. That's it. I've always wanted to be a psychologist. And then you come to Y032 and you suddenly discover a love of the law. So you want to move off in that direction instead, which is wonderful.

Or it might be that it confirms your suspicions that you've always wanted to be a psychologist. And merrily you will go on. But what you now understand is how that subject or set of subjects sits within a broader context. And I think we're all better learners when we recognise that our chosen way of looking at the world isn't the only way to look at the world. And actually, if we join together, blend our perspectives, much like an optician's chair, when they're putting the different lenses in-- is that better? is that better?--

that we get new knowledge, we get new understandings, we make connections where we never thought we could.

So I'm a music theatre gal at heart. But I have learned that actually the more I can learn, the more of these different lenses I can put on, the richer understanding I'll have of the things that are happening around me. And I think that's one of the things that Access tries to give students the opportunity to do.

KAREN FOLEY: Absolutely. And I think it's one of the wonderful things about the Open University more generally, is that you do specialise as you go up the ladder, as things get more and more complex. But you do have an opportunity to explore different things. We had an interdisciplinary talk this morning with the Open Programme. And that was really interesting. Because very often we'll end up being specialists at some point or another, on something. But actually sometimes we can forget all of those different angles that are so useful at grounding us in the first place.

Rosalynn said, "I really enjoyed the atoms." And Susan said, "The Open Learning courses on offer blew my mind away." I'd love to know which one that was, Susan. Maybe you can share that in the chat with us.

Sarah, one of your roles in the Student Support Team is that, often, students will be thinking about some of those choices. And they have a number of different places that they can discuss what's going to be best for them in the future. But one of the key places is with the Student Support Team, who have knowledge on the curriculum area but can also help students with their individual circumstances to sort of plan out what may be best. What can you share with us in terms of some students who've maybe approached you, and how you help them to either confirm or focus on a different direction?

SARAH MCKERNAN: Yes, I mean, absolutely, the Student Support Team is full of staff who can help students reflect on what they've enjoyed from their studies and what direction they might want to go in. And also the Career Service as well-- obviously the OU's got a really helpful Career Service. When people are focusing on where they want to go after their studies, they can help to help sort of define that and provide information and advice and guidance on how to pursue different careers.

So one of that we've heard from is Mark, who's on Y033 or "Yo 33," as I think we're forever going to refer to the courses from now on. And he was telling us about the fact that he studied, after quite a long time, having not studied for 25 years since leaving school, and really enjoyed the experiments part of the course. The potato experiment and the lasagna bridge, for any Y033 students out there.

But most importantly, that studying the module has made him realise that he thought he wanted to have a career in computing, but by studying and finding out more about maths, he's decided that actually that's where his passions lie. So he wants to consider doing accounting now and have a complete change of direction. And he probably wouldn't have discovered that he really enjoyed maths so much had he not had the opportunity to study that.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Let's see what our poll says. Because we asked, has your access module introduced you to a new subject that has inspired you? So let's see what the results say. Here we can see 58% say I love my subject even more. So it's given them a really good grounding. 19% say, I found a new subject I love. And 22% are still deciding.

So we've had lots of different things. I think Kirstie's really loved learning about chartism. So that's been absolutely wonderful as well.

So Sarah, when students call up and sort of have these things, how do you guide them through those processes? Because you're always very much about the student. Because ultimately, they're the ones who are going to have to study this for a long period of time. How do you help them make their minds up?

SARAH MCKERNAN: Yeah, well, think one of the things that people need to consider is, studying something for the foreseeable future-- so that could be 6 years-ish-- you want to do something that you're going to really enjoy and that you'll stick with. I mean, obviously one of the joys of the OU and particularly the Open qualifications is people can do a mix and match of different things. So that might be another thing that they want to consider is, is there a combination of subjects that they might find useful.

And then, obviously, if people have got a career in mind, then there's almost a working-back process, where you might do a bit of research about the kinds of qualifications that are needed for the career that you're interested in, and then make sure that your qualification matches the requirements of that. So I suppose, even though Access students are really at the beginning of their journey, it's making sure that what they do next and the decisions that they make now will enable them in the future.

Although, obviously, again, one of the joys of the OU is you can change your mind as you go along. And there's always flexibility and always help and support from Student Services colleagues who can help people to make those decisions and help them to change their mind if that's what they want to do or to confirm that they're on the right track. So I suppose being in touch with the team is the main thing.

KAREN FOLEY: Now I'd like to go to Mary, because Mary, in her other roles, is sort of lead for our Open Programme, which allows students to do the qualifications that are right for them. Because Sue was saying that she wants to do classical studies but has discovered a surprising love of linguistics and dialects. And David's been writing some sonnets as part of Y031.

So Mary, can you fill us in on some of those opportunities for students who may think, I can't just be confined into one category.

MARY KEYS: No, absolutely. So the Open degree is a kind of a real sort of jewel for us here at the OU. It just provides so much flexibility for students. And it really is a degree that's student led. So it gives you the options to be able to choose from a wide variety of our curriculum areas. So it means that you can be thinking that, if you're enjoying maths and you want to stay with maths, that's great, but if actually you also then want to move and move into any other subject-- so environment or physics or whichever-- it gives you the scope to do that.

So it really is lovely. Because the degree is about what the students want and about what they enjoy. And it gives them the scope to do that And. Then also to change your mind. It means that you don't have to decide, right from the start off, what you want to do. It allows you to try your different modules and try your different courses.

So yeah, it's great. And our students really enjoy the fact that they are they're kind of in the driving seat of their study and their degree.

And sorry, just picking up on some of the chat as well, I can kind of see that coming through, where students are starting a module thinking one thing, and then the Access modules have just opened up new ideas and new worlds to them which they're then able to go off to explore, which is really good to see.

And it's really nice to hear all the feedback.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Thank you. Thank you, Mary. That's wonderful.

OK, so Sarah, do we have a winner for our Change of Direction?

SARAH MCKERNAN: We do. So we've got--

KAREN FOLEY: Very nice envelope.

SARAH MCKERNAN: The Change in Direction envelope was nearly as big as me. And-- the suspense is killing me-- the winner is Mark. Yay!

There will be a little something on its way in the post. We'll get everybody's contact details and get those in the post to people.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Thank you very much. And those are our formal awards. So in the last few minutes of today's show, we're going to talk a little bit about confidence. And I'd really like everyone to fill in our widget. We've got a word cloud. And for these to work, you need to put one, two, or three things there. But you have to put something in each box, otherwise the results won't submit. And when you have added something, as you may have guessed from the other widgets, you'll be able to see what other people have written as well.

So if you could fill in "I picked myself and carried on when" and "I felt most confident when." So we're going to really start talking about confidence now. And this is something we've heard from a lot today. Renu, could I come to you, please, because we haven't spoken to you for a little while. And one thing I do know is that you've been working on the Access modules in various roles. But you've also tutored a lot of students, being an associate lecturer. And I wonder if you can tell us a little bit about how your students have developed in confidence, from right at the beginning, when they start those learning plans, to the way that they maybe reflect on them at the end of the course.

RENU BHANDARI: Yes, Karen. It's a beautiful journey. I think I have a whole range of students who are initially very apprehensive. They get very worried. They come up with studying for a very long time. And they're very worried about writing the first assignment. And I think that's the first big barrier to break. And I've had students who have gone out in the learning plan in the first year, saying, well, I really can't make a start. I have my low confidence. What do I do? How do I work through it?

And then I see a gradual improvement coming to the sessions, talking, discussing what the questions are, what the references are, how to write a paragraph. And by the end of TMA4, I really see some beautiful learning journeys completed where students are saying, well, I have the confidence. And I think people who have said, you can't do it, I can do it.

And I've seen a lot of students who have come to that point, giving themselves information. And not just that, saying, well, from Access, I've got a very big launchpad to now have the confidence to go to my level 1 module, which I think is incredible.

I've tutored many students in secure units as well. And a very beautiful thing where one student actually, after achieving his Y032 to module, sent me a handmade card to say, this is the first time ever in my life that I felt that I have the confidence to win life. And I think that was a beautiful quote. It has stayed with me for many long years, but to just show that students come a long way. And Access gives them that opportunity to explore ideas, to come through on different ideas about profession itself. They might change direction, they might carry on. But it is a very good platform to build on a level 1. So really incredible journeys. And I think each student, in their own right, is a very unique person for all of us. I thoroughly enjoyed tutoring Y032. If somebody is watching me and is one of my students, they know how passionate about writing skills-- essay writing, academic writing. But equally I always take care of the individual students.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Thank you, Renu. That's wonderful.

And Jay, I wonder if people are reflecting-- of the students on the October presentation who are coming up to the end of module TMA, I wonder if any of them have done the slightly easier part of that task, which is the learning review, thinking about where they've come and what they've gained from the module. Are there any reflections that we can share other than the ones that we've been talking about a little bit earlier?

JAY RIXON: The easy answer is no. But what I might do is just ask people if they can put some of those sorts of things in the chat. Because actually we know that sometimes exploring kind of the learning at the end, when you've done it in reflection, it means a lot, doesn't it? And you realise just how far you've come. And you realise the impact of that as well. So I'll ask and see if people can share some ideas and share some experiences.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah, I hope no one's talking about cake and dogs and stuff like that.

JAY RIXON: Not yet, not yet. That's always me, but not yet.

[ALL CHUCKLE]

KAREN FOLEY: No, absolutely, absolutely. George, let me come to you. It has been a really hard year, I think, for everyone. Everyone's had different battles and different stuff going on. What are your reflections about this year and what people can really take away having survived?

GEORGE CURRY: Well, I mean, it's been an extraordinary year, hasn't it, for all of us, the fact that we're doing this session all in our kitchens and spare rooms and wherever else, rather than being on your lovely sofa, Karen, is testament to not only the extraordinary way we're living our lives at the moment but also the way that we can find innovative ways to keep going and keep doing those things. Because here we all still are.

So I've been completely astounded by the tenacity of the students that are on Access who have often been out of education, haven't thought of themselves as learners for a really, really long time. And here you all are. Here you all are, studying, in the middle of a global pandemic. We've been homeschooling, we've been working from home. We've been not allowed out. We haven't had enough loo paper. But despite all of that, here we still are. And it's because education is important and learning is important. And actually it can help us understand more about what's happening to us and around us. So I think, if Access can be a safe space where individuals can come together and explore who they are, what they want to be, what they want to do, and what lights a fire within them, and if that can continue to happen under these amazing circumstances, then we're doing something right, aren't we, all? We're doing something right. And I'm just very proud of all the Access students.

KAREN FOLEY: Absolutely. Because the one thing that separates people who succeed from people who fail is that the people who succeed, despite the failures along the way, keep putting that one foot in front of the other. They keep going.

And I think stuff is hard. It is really, really tricky to balance some of these things that are going on in many of our lives. But the fact that you guys are still doing that and are here today as well, is really just testament. I hope that you will feel really proud of yourselves for that. Because it is such an accomplishment.

GEORGE CURRY: But do do your emTMA 4.

KAREN FOLEY: Oh, yeah, you must do that. You must do that--

[ALL CHUCKLE]

--or it all goes apart. I mean, one of the things we do know as well, for anyone who is on our October presentation, is that the students who have got this fall and just need to finish that emTMA 04. They're the ones who'll be absolutely fine. Because you've already written an essay, so you know you can do it. You're just going to write a slightly better one this time. So do keep going with that. And the students who are at the beginning of your journey as well, I hope you've enjoyed today's session also.

Let's take a look at the I've Picked Myself Up widget. So let's see what our word cloud says when we asked students how they've picked themselves up.

Oh, wow. Goodness me. Here's some of the stuff that's been going on. People have been "depressed," very common, "made redundant," "felt down," "got behind," "low self-esteem," "found it hard," the lockdown came-- yeah, it was all so challenging-- "got cancer," "was overthinking," "had a baby," "my interest was grabbed," "my ex said it was a daft idea."

Gosh, some of these things are absolutely incredible to overcome, from things that can sometimes seem really hard, like time management, which in principle often can seem like it would be OK if we had more time. But logistically speaking, these are really, really, really hard things to look at.

I wonder if we can get our confidence widget ready, because that would be a lovely thing to end on. If you haven't filled that in yet, if you could do the same. So you just need to put a full stop or a dot when that's ready. So let's take a look and see what you had to say about confidence.

Oh, there we are. Oh, TMA results, that's making us most confident. But also wonderful positive things like "enjoying myself," "keeping fit," "completing the assignment," "passing," "making time," "talking to my tutor--" that's really important-- "deciding to study," aw, "met my wife," that's lovely, "putting things into practise," "tutor says yay," "talking about my learning," "gave myself a pep talk," "community," which is a wonderful thing. I hope you've enjoyed some of that today. "Playing music," "I practised more," "I finished." So some wonderful things here.

Let me just invite our panel just to say a final word, perhaps reflecting on some of those wonderful words that said that our audience have given us. George, let me start with you.

GEORGE CURRY: Well, reading Shakespeare, I mean, that's made my day. Amazing, amazing.

Everyone should read Shakespeare, definitely.

No, I think the first word cloud, I was just struck by how complicated and complex people's lives are. And we know that being a student is a tiny part of all of your lives. And you're juggling all of these other things around. And we're so grateful that you're keeping going and continuing to journey with us through the access module. We do understand that you've got lots of different calls on your time, this year more than ever probably.

So yeah, just again, like Mary and a few others have said, a bit humbled and a bit overwhelmed with the achievements, the everyday achievements.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Carrie says, "I know I can do things and to push myself out of my comfort zone more," which is fun. [? Elise ?] has learned that she's capable. And Sue said, "What have I learned? This girl can." And she says, "This girl's 50-plus," which is very young indeed, Sue.

And Danielle said, "It's made me realise how much time I used to waste on rubbish." So yeah, when we're pushed for time, we can certainly achieve a lot if we focus our attention.

So Sarah, what are your final reflections?

SARAH MCKERNAN: Yeah, well I think, as we've seen And. As we experience when we talk to students, life does get in the way of studying. And I suppose the message that I would want to leave people with is

there is help available. So if there are problems, speak to your tutor, speak to the Student Support Team. Even if people get quite far behind, there's very little that can't be resolved. And there's lots of help and advice out there. So really make contact and talk to people.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Thank you. And Renu, what are your final words?

RENU BHANDARI: Well, I'm amazed. You know, I knew that our Access students are fab. You know, they work, they have resilience, they have power.

But all I'm going to say is take each step, take it nice and easy, take it closer, and take it closer towards your final goal. Each step you take, no matter how hard it is, that step will get you to your final result, your final goal. So keep going, Access students. Thank you.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Thank you very much. Well, that's been a wonderful event. I hope you've all had a really nice time. I hope you've taken this hour of personal development planning time to reflect on things, to talk to other people. And I know how wonderful and supportive all of you are in the chat. I hope that you can be just as supportive to yourselves as you are to each other and remembering all of the incredible hurdles that you've overcome and the way that you've been able to keep putting one foot in front of the other.

Unfortunately, that's all we've got time for today. But I'd like to thank my panel, thank Jay and Mary on the Hotdesk today, and everybody backstage also who's put on this event for us.

And thank you, all of you at home. I hope you've got something useful out of today. Don't forget that you're all very welcome to all of the Student Hub Live workshops and broadcast sessions that we've got on. You can check out the Student Hub Live website and you can subscribe with your email there so that you can come and join us for other things. We've got some nice events over the summer, looking at different sort of topic areas of interest at the OU. So make sure that you can come along to those also.

If you've got any feedback, you can email studenthub@open.ac.uk. Oh, I'm not sure if someone's doorbell there. [CHUCKLES] Heard a bit of a ringing. Oh, George. Yeah, you put "after 2:30." We should go off air now. We're over time to be honest. We're sort of a wing and a prayer. [CHUCKLES]

But yeah, we'll love and leave you all. Thank you so much, everybody, for coming. I hope you've enjoyed. And we'll see you at our next session very soon.

Yeah, I know the producer would find a way to get us off air eventually. [CHUCKLES] So we'll say bye for now, everybody. And thank you so much for being here. Have a lovely rest of the day and enjoy your studies. We'll see you very soon.

[MUSIC PLAYING]